

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** January 6, 2021

**TO:** Pierce County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

**BY:** Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

**SUBJECT:** **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 940164**  
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments that include acknowledging language and policies under the Housing and Land Use elements that provide direction to identify strategies to expand opportunities for meeting the needs of farmworker housing.  
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

**NOTICE:** Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

**SEPA:** SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

**ATTACHMENT:** Attachment A – Proposed Amendments

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal would add background information addressing farmworker housing in Pierce County and incorporate additional goals and policies that support expanding opportunities for new farmworker housing.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A**. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal as it is consistent with [Resolution No. 2018-117s](#) to increase opportunities for agricultural support services and farmworker housing.

## IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If the proposal is adopted, regulatory amendments may be necessary to implement the new farmworker housing policies.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS

*Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan*, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.  
The proposal would not impact the rate of development or promote the conversion of land outside the vision of the Plan. The proposal may have a minimal impact on the rate of growth as the policies promote to increase the supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers and the agricultural industry.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.  
The proposal would not impact the County's ability to provide public facilities.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.  
The proposal would have little to no effect on population growth and would minimally impact employment growth. It would potentially enhance employment security and stabilize employment for agricultural operations.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.  
The proposal would help meet Plan objectives to improve and expand opportunities for affordable housing and make agricultural operations more viable.
5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.  
The proposal would potentially lead to a marginal increase in agricultural land values and would reduce housing costs for agricultural employees.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.  
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.  
The proposal would conform to the requirements of the GMA and is internally consistent with the Plan. The proposal is also consistent with the findings and intent of RCW 70.114A Temporary Worker Housing—Health and Safety Regulation, which encourages the development of temporary and permanent employee housing.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.  
The proposal would not impact critical areas or natural resource lands.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.  
Not applicable.

10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.

The proposal supports policies that enhance and promote the long-term success of agriculture in the County. The proposal was presented at the October 21, 2020 Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting; the Committee was in support of the proposal as it complements Pierce County Council's Resolution No. 2018-117s to increase opportunities for agricultural support services and farmworker housing.

***Applicable RCWs/Policies***

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

**RCW 36.70A.070:** The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

**RCW 36.70A.020(4):** Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

### **Other RCW**

#### **Public Health and Safety**

**RCW 70.114A.010:** Findings—Intent. The legislature finds that there is an inadequate supply of temporary and permanent housing for migrant and seasonal workers in this state. The legislature also finds that unclear, complex regulations related to the development, construction, and permitting of worker housing inhibit the development of this much needed housing. The legislature further finds that as a result, many workers are forced to obtain housing that is unsafe and unsanitary.

Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to encourage the development of temporary and permanent housing for workers that is safe and sanitary by: Establishing a clear and concise set of regulations for temporary housing; establishing a streamlined permitting and administrative process that will be locally administered and encourage the development of such housing; and by providing technical assistance to organizations or individuals interested in the development of worker housing.

## MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

### **Development Patterns Policies / Promoting Healthy Communities (page 95)**

**MPP-DP-20** Support agricultural, farmland, and aquatic uses that enhance the food system in the central Puget Sound region and its capacity to produce fresh and minimally processed foods.

### **Development Patterns Policies / Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands (page 97)**

**MPP-DP-39** Support long-term solutions for the environmental and economic sustainability of agriculture and forestry within rural areas.

## **Economy Policies (page 121)**

**MPP-EC-23** Support economic activity in rural and natural resource areas at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

## **PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPS)**

### **Economic Development and Employment (page 35)**

**Ec-6** The County, and each municipality in the County, shall work to strengthen existing businesses and industries and to add to the diversity of economic opportunity and employment by:

- 6.9** in rural areas promoting compatible occupations (such as, but not limited to, tourism, cottage and home-based businesses, and local services) that do not conflict with rural character and resource-based land uses, but provides needed employment in cities in the rural areas; and
- 6.10** in rural and natural resource areas supporting economic activity at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

### **Rural Areas / Overarching Goal (page 61)**

**Rur-1** The County will sustain the ecological functions, resource value, lifestyle, and character of rural lands for future generations by limiting the types and intensities of development in rural areas.

### **Rural Areas / Economic Development (page 61)**

**Rur-10** Support economic activity in rural and natural resource areas at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

### **Rural Areas / Environment (page 62)**

**Rur-13** Support long-term solutions for the environmental and economic sustainability of agriculture and forestry within rural areas.

## **PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **Land Use Element (page 2-68)**

**LU-87.7.1** A community plan can include density exceptions with a maximum residential density no greater than 1 unit per 5 acres. Community plans may include provisions for clustering of lots provided that the parent parcel is 20 acres or larger in size and the clustering results in no more than 10 lots per cluster. The remaining unclustered area must be dedicated to agriculture. Lots created after February 1, 2005, shall not be used to de-designate Agricultural Resource Lands using the criteria in the Comprehensive Plan.

**LU 87.7.2** The implementing regulations for a community plan may provide for a density exception for housing seasonal farm workers in a community planning process.

### **Economic Development Element (page 6-14)**

**EC-4.5** Commit resources to improving the viability of agriculture.

### **Alderton-McMillin Community Plan / Agricultural Resource Lands & Rural Farm Policies (page A-30)**

**AM LU-3.6** Allow opportunities for employee housing on agricultural lands.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

### Housing Element / Solutions to Housing Issues (page 9-11)

#### Farmworker Housing

Most agricultural activity occurs in rural areas where there are limited housing opportunities. As affordable farmworker housing contributes to a sustainable agricultural economy, it is appropriate for Pierce County to address this topic in its housing element. Pierce County can play a role in providing diverse rural housing choices through zoning and incentives for farmworker housing such as temporary housing that would not remove long-term productive agricultural lands. Recognizing the close proximity of some farmland to the urban areas, encouraging affordable housing solutions in both unincorporated and incorporated areas is appropriate.

#### Farmworker Housing

**GOAL H-15** Identify strategies to expand opportunities to increase supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers and the agricultural industry.

**H-15.1** Protect the economic viability of the agricultural industry by considering innovative planning techniques to allow for farmworker housing supporting agricultural resource activities.

**H-15.2** Consider the seasonal nature of farming and potential options to accommodate seasonal housing that does not permanently convert agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

**H-15.3** Explore the opportunity to provide a siting process to expedite farmworker housing projects using preapproved designs for housing of both temporary and permanent farmworkers employed by the property owner.

**H-15.4** Work with the agricultural community to develop criteria and a process for siting permanent and migrant farmworker housing in rural and agricultural resource areas with consideration given to neighborhood and project security, health and sanitation, availability of public services, access, child care, and the availability of affordable housing in a nearby urban area.

**GOAL H-16** Collaborate with public agencies, private institutions, and organizations to remove barriers to providing farmworker housing, and explore innovative approaches to meeting farmworker housing needs.

**H-16.1** Encourage new housing and/or housing rehabilitation in suitable areas.

**H-16.2** Evaluate state requirements for farmworker housing.

**GOAL H-17** Monitor future development and consider regulatory amendments as necessary to support this type of housing along with other farmworker housing.

### Land Use Element / Rural / Rural and Resource Agricultural Activity (page 2-58)

**LU-80** Recognize farmworker housing is an integral part of the agricultural economy of Pierce County.

**LU-80.1** Explore opportunities to permit temporary and permanent farmworker housing standards and policies to allow for construction of farmworker housing and infrastructure.

**LU-80.2** In providing opportunities for farmworker housing, balance the protection of agricultural lands with the need for farmworker housing.

*ADD new sidebar text box adjacent to new policy:*

Addressing the housing needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers offer a measure of economic stability to growers grappling with an unstable workforce in the face of market pressures and improve the stability of regional food systems and the agricultural economy. See Farmworker Housing under the Housing Element for more information.